CSE 333

Mini-lecture 13 - revisiting references

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Administrivia

No lecture on Friday

- I'm away at a conference PC committee meeting

Exercise 11 out later this afternoon

- due on Monday

∃ confusion about references

When should they be used?

- as arguments?
- as return values?

When can using them cause trouble?

Let’s go through examples

I’ll show you some code, you tell me whether:

(a) we must use a reference

(b) it’s OK and encouraged to use a reference

(c) it’s OK but discouraged to use a reference

(d) we must NOT use a reference

see arg1.cc

arg1.cc

(a) we must use a reference

(b) it’s OK and encouraged to use a reference

(c) it’s OK but discouraged to use a reference

(d) we must NOT use a reference

For simple primitive types (int, float, etc.), passing in a const reference results in a correct program, but the performance benefit is questionable.

see arg2.cc

arg2.cc

(a) we must use a reference

(b) it's OK and encouraged to use a reference

(c) it's OK but discouraged to use a reference

(d) we must NOT use a reference

For complex types (structs, object instances), passing in a const reference results in a correct program and likely gives you some performance benefits.

- pop quiz: why not pass in a pointer instead?

see ret1.cc

ret1.cc

(a) we must use a reference

(b) it’s OK and encouraged to use a reference

(c) it’s OK but discouraged to use a reference

(d) we must NOT use a reference

Never return a reference to a local (stack allocated) variable; it’s the same error as returning a pointer to one.

see Complex1.h

Complex1.h

(a) we must use a reference

(b) it's OK and encouraged to use a reference

(c) it's OK but discouraged to use a reference

(d) we must NOT use a reference

Pass a const reference as the argument to the copy constructor; it is correct, safe, and efficient.

see Complex2.h

Complex2.h

(a) we must use a reference

(b) it’s OK and encouraged to use a reference

(c) it’s OK but discouraged to use a reference

(d) we must NOT use a reference

Because we don’t want to return (a reference to *this), but instead (a copy of a local variable), we cannot use a reference in this case.

- pop quiz: does chaining work if we correct the code?

see Complex3.h

Complex3.h

(a) we must use a reference

(b) it's OK and encouraged to use a reference

(c) it's OK but discouraged to use a reference

(d) we must NOT use a reference

We must use a reference so chaining works correctly. It is also more efficient to use a reference.

- pop quiz: why does chaining break if we don't use a reference? give an example of chained code that breaks.

see Complex4.h

Complex4.h

(a) we must use a reference

(b) it's OK and encouraged to use a reference

(c) it's OK but discouraged to use a reference

(d) we must NOT use a reference

This is the same case as the plain assignment operator; we must return a reference so that chaining works.

see Complex5.h

Complex5.h

(a) we must use a reference

(b) it's OK and encouraged to use a reference

(c) it's OK but discouraged to use a reference

(d) we must NOT use a reference

This is the same case as the assignment operator; we must return a reference so that chaining works. More so, copying std::cin doesn't make sense (and is prevented)!

See you on Monday!